

TRANSMISSION CIRCUIT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to circuits for transmitters of radio communications,
5 below denoted as “transmission circuits”.

In general, to process modulated signals with amplitude modulation, especially
multiple modulation such as Quadrature Amplitude Modulation (QAM), radio-frequency
power amplifiers in transmission circuits for transmitting power to antennas need linear
amplification. Therefore, class A or AB had been adopted as operation classes of the RF
10 power amplifiers.

However, with the progress of broadband communication, communication methods
using subcarrier modulation such as Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplex (OFDM)
have come to be used and high efficiency is not expected any more with the conventional
class-A or AB radio frequency amplifiers. That is, in the OFDM modulation, subcarriers
15 are overlapped so that a large amount of power is instantaneously generated at random
time and the ratio between the average power and the peak power, i.e., a Peak to Average
Power Ratio (PAPR), is high. Therefore, a large amount of DC power always needs to be
held in order to allow linear amplification of peak power which is much greater than the
average power. With respect to class-A operation, the efficiency is only 50 % at the
20 maximum. In particular, in the case of the OFDM modulation, since the PAPR is high, DC
power obtained by multiplying current by the difference between the peak voltage for the
peak power and the peak voltage for the peak power is lost in the form of heat in almost all
the time except for the period in which the peak power is output. Accordingly, the
resultant efficiency decreases largely.

25 As a result, wireless equipments using batteries as their power supplies, for

example, have shorter continuous operation time, and thus inconveniences arise in actual application.

To solve this problem, a conventional Envelope Elimination and Restoration (EER) technique known as Kahn Technique was proposed in FIG. 6 of U.S. Patent No. 6256482B1, for example.

FIG. 8 is a circuit block diagram showing a general concept of a known EER technique. In FIG. 8, an OFDM modulated wave (modulated signal) generated by a modulator 401 is input to a detector 402, which is a modulated signal detecting means, through a modulated signal line 410. The detector 402 detects the OFDM modulated wave by dividing the wave into a phase component and an amplitude component. Specifically, the IQ carriers of the OFDM modulated wave generated by the modulator 401 are divided into an amplitude component $\sqrt{I^2 + Q^2}$ and a phase component $\tan^{-1}(Q/I)$ and these components are detected. The phase component (conjugated phase modulated wave) is transmitted from the detector 402 through phase component lines 411, is up-converted by a phase component quadrature modulator 404, and then is input to an RF input terminal of a PA 405 (RF power amplifier) in the form of RF signal power. The amplitude component (amplitude modulated wave) is transmitted through an amplitude component line 412, is subjected to DC-to-DC conversion in a DC-to-DC converter 403, and then is input to a power-supply-voltage terminal of the PA 405.

Now, as an example of the OFDM modulated wave in the case of IEEE 802.11a, about 7 dB is needed as a backoff (the amount representing how much lower the output power is than the saturation power). That is, only 20 % of the RF peak power is used as the RF output power, so that the efficiency deteriorates from 50 % to 10 %. To use the class-A or AB PA with high efficiency, the minimum power-supply voltage required to output RF power is successively applied to the PA and the backoff is ideally 0 dB.

To solve this problem, in the EER technique, a modulated signal wave in which a quadrature modulation has been performed on a phase component obtained by polar mapping of a modulated signal is applied to the PA 405. The modulated wave with this phase component is a sine wave whose amplitude is constant and whose phase changes with time, so that the PA 405 is operable with a backoff of almost 0 dB. As the output of the PA 405, the amplitude component input from the power-supply-voltage terminal is multiplied by the phase component, so that the same modulated wave as that obtained by performing the quadrature modulation on the original modulated signal is obtained.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

However, the known EER technique has a drawback in which the modulated signal wave is not restored correctly because the resultant spectrum mask or EVM (Error Vector Magnitude) does not satisfy the wireless standard in the response of the output voltage of the PA 405 with constant power applied thereto with respect to the power supply voltage thereof.

FIGS. 9A, 9B and 9C are graphs respectively showing the voltage amplitude V_{in} of an amplitude component input to a power-supply-voltage terminal V_{DD} of the conventional PA 405, the response characteristic of an output voltage R_{Fout} with respect to an input voltage to the power-supply-voltage terminal V_{DD} of the PA 405, and the voltage amplitude of the output voltage R_{Fout} with respect to the voltage amplitude V_{in} . As shown in FIG. 9B, the response of the PA 405 is a nonlinear response. Accordingly, if the EER technique is conducted, the phase component is multiplied by the amplitude component at the output of the PA 405, so that an error in the amplitude component at 1V or less causes the EVM and the spectrum to deteriorate when a modulated signal wave is generated.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a transmission circuit using an EER technique by which no signal deterioration occurs even with a PA exhibiting a nonlinear response.

As a basic configuration of a transmission circuit according to the present invention, at least an amplitude component of a modulated signal, which includes a phase component and the amplitude component, is detected, an amplitude component line for transmitting the amplitude component is provided, and judging means for judging whether or not an amplitude value of the amplitude component of the modulated signal is larger than a threshold value is provided on the amplitude component line.

With this configuration, it is possible to change a transmission method depending on the level of the amplitude component of the modulated signal, so that drawbacks of normal class-A operation and drawbacks in using an EER technique are suppressed. It is sufficient that the threshold value is set at a value corresponding to a boundary between the region in which a signal to be transmitted exhibits a linear response and the region in which the signal exhibits a nonlinear response. The linear response region is a region in which the linearity satisfies the spectrum mask and the EVM specified by the wireless standard under operation in which an appropriate offset voltage is applied to the response and the voltage amplitude component is multiplied by a constant of proportion such that the response range includes a voltage amplitude swing of the amplitude component of the modulated signal. The nonlinear response region is a region in which the linearity does not satisfy the wireless standard under the same operation. In this manner, it is possible to adopt a high-efficiency technique such as an EER technique in the region in which the signal to be transmitted satisfies the wireless standard, while adopting a technique capable of suppressing deterioration in the quality of the signal in the region in which the signal does not satisfy the wireless standard.

In the basic configuration described above, if the phase component as well as the amplitude component is detected and first selection outputting means for outputting the modulated signal to a modulated signal line if the amplitude value of the amplitude component is smaller than or equal to the threshold value and outputting the phase component to a phase component line for transmitting the phase component if the amplitude value is larger than the threshold value is provided, and second selection outputting means for outputting a constant voltage to a constant-voltage supply line if the amplitude value of the amplitude component is smaller than or equal to the threshold value and outputting the amplitude component to the amplitude component line if the amplitude value is larger than the threshold value is provided, then the outputs of the first and second selection output means are respectively connected to an RF input terminal and a power-supply-voltage terminal of an RF power amplifier. Accordingly, an EER technique is performed only in the region in which the response of the amplitude of the output from the RF output of the RF power amplifier satisfies the wireless standard and a usual modulation is performed in the region in which the response does not satisfy the wireless standard. As a result, it is possible to prevent signal deterioration that can be caused when EER is performed in the region in which the response of the RF power amplifier does not satisfy the wireless standard, thus implementing a transmission circuit with high efficiency and without deterioration of the signal to be transmitted.

The inventive transmission circuit may further include DC-to-DC converting means connected to the second selection outputting means and performing voltage conversion on an output signal from the second selection outputting means.

The inventive transmission circuit may further include means for specifying the level of output power to modulated signal generating means. Then, the output power level to be output is specified to the modulated signal generating means, so that the output power

level is arbitrarily set by setting the IQ level using the modulated signal generating means.

The inventive transmission circuit may further include frequency converting means disposed between the first selection outputting means and the RF power amplifier. Then, it is possible to process an RF signal covering a wider band. For example, since the DA
5 converter handles signals with frequencies in the band of several hundreds MHz at most, the DA converter cannot process carriers whose frequencies exceed GHz. However, if the frequency converting means such as a quadrature converter is used, the carrier frequency is up-converted easily.

In addition to the basic configuration described above, the inventive transmission
10 circuit may include selection outputting means for outputting a constant voltage to the constant-voltage supply line if the amplitude value of the amplitude component is smaller than or equal to the threshold value and outputting the amplitude component to the amplitude component line if the amplitude value is larger than the threshold value, depending on the judgment result of the judging means. Then, a pseudo-EER technique
15 which is substantially the same as an EER technique is performed only in the region in which the response of the amplitude of the output from the RF output terminal of the RF power amplifier satisfies the wireless standard and a usual modification is performed in the region in which the response does not satisfy the wireless standard. As a result, it is possible to prevent signal deterioration that can be caused when EER is performed in the
20 region in which the response of the RF power amplifier does not satisfy the wireless standard, thus implementing a transmission circuit with high efficiency and without deterioration of the signal to be transmitted.

In such a case, if frequency converting means is provided between the modulated signal generating means and the RF power amplifier, it is possible to process an RF signal
25 covering a wider band. For example, since the DA converter handles signals with

the response characteristic of an output voltage **RFout** with respect to an input voltage to the power-supply-voltage terminal, and the voltage amplitude of the output voltage **RFout** with respect to the voltage amplitude **Vin**.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

EMBODIMENT 1

Hereinafter, a first embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to the drawings. In this embodiment, OFDM is adopted for a modulation scheme. Examples of systems using OFDM are based on IEEE 802.11a standard, one of the wireless LAN standards. In a wireless LAN system, each of the 52 orthogonal subcarriers is modulated by, for example, 64 QAM, then an inverse discrete Fourier transform is conducted, and then each resultant carrier is multiplexed, thus obtaining an OFDM modulated signal. The 52 carriers are separated with a spacing of 312.5 kHz and occupy $52 \times 312.5 = 16.25$ MHz in total.

FIG. 1 is a circuit diagram showing a transmission circuit for implementing an EER technique according to the first embodiment. As shown in FIG. 1, the transmission circuit includes: a modulated signal generator **101** as a modulated signal generating means for generating an OFDM modulated wave (modulated signal) including an amplitude component and a phase component; modulated signal lines **120** through which the OFDM modulated wave flows; a detector **102** as a modulated signal detecting means for detecting the amplitude component and the phase component of the OFDM modulated wave; phase component lines **121** for transmitting the phase component of the OFDM modulated wave; an amplitude component line **122** for transmitting the amplitude component of the OFDM modulated wave; a level judging circuit **106** as a judging means for judging whether the level of the amplitude component of the OFDM modulated wave is higher than a threshold

voltage level or not; a ROM 109 as a storage means for storing a threshold voltage level to be used as a reference for the level judgment of the level judging circuit 106; a constant-voltage supply line 111 connected to a power-supply-voltage terminal at which a voltage of 1.1 V is received and used for supplying a constant voltage of 1.1 V; a first selector 103
5 as a first selection outputting means for selecting either one of the OFDM modulated wave from the modulated signal generator 101 and the phase component from the detector 102, based on the judgment result of the level judgment circuit 106; a signal selector 107 as a second selection outputting means for selecting either one of the amplitude component input through the amplitude component line 122 and the constant voltage of 1.1 V supplied
10 through the constant voltage line 111, based on the judgment result of the level judgment circuit 106; a DC-to-DC converter 108; a quadrature modulator 104 for performing a quadrature modulation on an output from the first selector 103; and a PA 105 (RF amplifier) for receiving an RF signal output from the quadrature modulator 104 at its RF input terminal and receiving the amplitude component from the DC-to-DC converter 108 at
15 its power-supply-voltage terminal; and a transmit power control section 110 for specifying output power to the modulated signal generator 101.

The modulated signal generator 101 generates the above-described OFDM modulated wave (modulated signal). The OFDM modulated wave generated by the modulated signal generator 101 is input to the first selector 103 through the modulated
20 signal lines 120.

The detector 102 detects the OFDM modulated wave flowing through the modulated signal lines 120 by dividing the wave into a phase component (a conjugated phase modulated wave) and an amplitude component (an amplitude modulated wave). Specifically, the IQ vector wave of the OFDM modulated wave generated by the
25 modulated signal generator 101 is divided into an amplitude component $\sqrt{I^2 + Q^2}$ and a

phase component $\tan^{-1} (Q/I)$ and these components are detected. The phase component is input to the first selector 103 through the phase component lines 121 as an IQ modulated wave, and the amplitude component is input to the second selector 107 through the amplitude component line 122.

5 The level judging circuit 106 receives the threshold voltage level stored in the ROM 109 and the amplitude component flowing through the amplitude component line 122 and judges whether or not the voltage level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

 The first selector 103 selects and outputs one of the phase component of the OFDM
10 modulated wave input through the phase component lines 121 and the OFDM modulated wave input through the modulated signal lines 120, based on the judgment result of the level judging circuit 106. At this time, if the voltage level of the amplitude component flowing through the amplitude component line 122 is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level stored in the ROM 109, the first selector 103 selects and outputs the OFDM
15 modulated wave as a modulated signal, while selecting and outputting the phase component from the detector 102 if the voltage level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

 The second selector 107 selects and outputs one of the constant voltage of 1.1 V from the constant-voltage supply line 111 and the amplitude component input through the
20 amplitude component line 122, based on the judgment result of the level judging circuit 106. At this time, if the voltage level of the amplitude component flowing through the amplitude component line 122 is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level stored in the ROM 109, the second selector 107 selects and outputs the constant voltage of 1.1 V from the constant-voltage supply line 111, while selecting and outputting the amplitude
25 component from the detector 102 if the voltage level of the amplitude component is higher

than the threshold voltage level.

The quadrature modulator **104** changes the conjugated phase modulated wave (Quadrature and In-phase) output from the first selector **103** into an RF signal.

The DC-to-DC converter **108** amplifies the output from the second selector **107** and
5 supplies an amplitude modulated signal having a desired voltage amplitude to the power-supply-voltage terminal of the PA **105**.

The PA **105** is a class-A RF power amplifier and receives the RF signal output from the quadrature modulator **104** at its RF input terminal. When the system adopts an EER technique, the PA **105** receives the amplitude component subjected to DC conversion
10 by the DC-to-DC converter **108** at its power-supply-voltage terminal. As a result, the PA **105** outputs a modulated wave whose phase and amplitude have been modulated, i.e., a modulated wave in which the amplitude is multiplied by the phase. If the system adopts a usual IQ quadrature modulation, the PA **105** fixes the voltage to be supplied from its power-supply-voltage terminal at 1.1 V to perform linear amplification.

15 The transmit power control section **110** receives specification regarding transmission power control from a Media Access Control (MAC) or other sections.

—Example of Signal Change in Processing—

FIG. 2 is a diagram for describing an example of change of a signal processed in
20 the transmission circuit of this embodiment. FIGS. 3A and 3B are graphs showing response characteristics of the voltages of output signals **RFout** of the RF amplifiers **405** and **105** with respect to input voltages input to power-supply-voltage terminals of the RF amplifiers **405** and **105** in a conventional transmission circuit and the transmission circuit of this embodiment, respectively.

25 As shown in FIG. 2, the output level specified by, for example, the MAC is input to

the modulated signal generator **101** via the transmit power control section **110** so that an IQ quadrature signal of an OFDM modulated wave exhibiting a constellation as shown in graph **2A** in FIG. 2 is generated in accordance with the output level. The OFDM modulated wave is detected by the detector **102**, being divided into an amplitude component shown in graph **2B** in FIG. 2 and a conjugated phase component (phase component) (not shown). The level judging circuit **106** compares the output amplitude component with the threshold voltage level set in the ROM **109** to judge whether or not the level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

As shown in FIG. 3A, for example, the threshold voltage level set in the ROM **109** is herein the minimum value, e.g., 1V, in a linear region in which the response characteristic between an input voltage of the RF power amplifier and the voltage of an output signal thereof exhibits a sufficient linear response. Alternatively, the threshold voltage level may be set by an appropriate formula manipulation. The linear region is herein the range in which an output spectrum or EVM (Error Vector Magnitude) of an output satisfies the wireless standard of communication systems, and does not mean that the response characteristic is a perfect linear characteristic.

The level judging circuit **106** judges whether the level of the amplitude component generated by the detector **102** is higher than the threshold voltage level (judgment **A**) or is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level (judgment **B**), and outputs the judgment result **A** or **B** to the selectors **107** and **103**.

If the judgment **A** is input from the level judging circuit **106**, i.e., the amplitude component is in the state shown in graph **2C** in FIG. 2, the second selector **107** selects the amplitude component (see graph **2E** in FIG. 2) input from the detector **102** through the amplitude component line **122**, whereas the first selector **103** selects the phase component (see graph **2F** in FIG. 2) input from the detector **102** through the phase component lines

121.

In this case, an EER technique is adopted in the transmission circuit. This EER technique allows the PA 105 to operate near a saturation point, i.e., to operate with the theoretical maximum efficiency. Accordingly, if the EER technique is performed, higher
5 efficiency is achieved.

On the other hand, if the judgment B is input from the level judging circuit 106, i.e., the amplitude component is in the state shown in graph 2D in FIG. 2, the first selector 103 selects the OFDM modulated wave (modulated signal) input from the modulated signal generator 101 through the modulated signal lines 120 and the second selector 107
10 selects the constant voltage of 1.1 V.

In this case, a usual IQ quadrature modulation is adopted in the transmission circuit. Accordingly, a small margin is added to the threshold voltage, which is herein set at 1V, and therefore the constant voltage to be supplied to the PA 105 is set at, for example, 1.1 V. Suppose the average voltage of a modulated wave having an amplitude of
15 1V or less is 0.8 V, the PA 105 operates with a backoff of about 2 dB. At this time, the efficiency is 31.5 %, which is 63 % of the theoretical efficiency in class-A operation of 50 %. Suppose operation of the PA 105 with the EER technique is saturation operation, a theoretical efficiency of 50 % is achieved. Accordingly, suppose the amplitude at the threshold voltage of 1 V or higher is about 10 %, the efficiency expected with the
20 configuration of this embodiment is $50 \times 0.1 + 31.5 \times 0.9 = 33.4 \%$.

On the other hand, if only the usual quadrature modulation is performed, an efficiency as small as 10 % is obtained. However, according to the present invention, the efficiency is greatly improved.

In a conventional transmission circuit, as shown in FIG. 3A, a nonlinear region in
25 which the wireless standard is not satisfied is present in the response characteristic of the

voltage amplitude at the RF output terminal **RFout** of the RF amplifier with respect to the voltage input to the power-supply-voltage terminal thereof, so that the output signal is distorted as shown in the left-part of FIG. 3A. On the other hand, in this embodiment, an offset voltage applied to the amplitude component is appropriately adjusted in the DC-to-DC converter (where the offset voltage is 0.5 V in this embodiment) and, if the voltage level of the amplitude component is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level, a usual quadrature modulation is performed. Accordingly, it is possible to make the entire response characteristic including 3A and 3B of the voltage amplitude at the terminal **RFout** with respect to the input voltage satisfies the wireless standard. As a result, the amplitude component is output without distortion as shown in the left-part of FIG. 3B. As already described above, the linear region in this case also means that the resultant spectrum output from the power amplifier or EVM of the output satisfies the wireless standard of communication systems, and does not mean that the response characteristic is a perfect linear characteristic.

EMBODIMENT 2

In this embodiment, OFDM is also adopted for modulation. FIG. 4 is a circuit block diagram schematically showing a configuration of a transmission circuit according to a second embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 4, the transmission circuit includes: a modulated signal generator **201** as a modulated signal generating means for generating an OFDM modulated wave (modulated signal) including an amplitude component and a phase component; modulated signal lines **220** through which the OFDM modulated wave flows; a detector **202** as a modulated signal detecting signal for detecting the amplitude component and the phase component of the OFDM modulated wave; an amplitude component line **222** for transmitting the amplitude component of the OFDM

modulated wave; a level judging circuit 206 as a judging means for judging whether the level of the amplitude is higher than a threshold voltage level or not; a ROM 209 as a storage means for storing a threshold voltage to be used as a reference for the level judgment of the level judging circuit 206; a first DC-to-DC converter 208 provided on the amplitude component line 222 and performing DC-to-DC conversion on the amplitude component; a constant-voltage supply line 211 for supplying a constant voltage; a second DC-to-DC converter 210 interposed in the constant-voltage supply line 211 and performing DC-to-DC conversion on a constant voltage of 3 V to output a constant voltage of 1.1 V; a signal selector 207 as a selection outputting means for selecting either one of the amplitude component supplied from the first DC-to-DC converter 208 and the constant voltage of 1.1 V supplied from the second DC-to-DC converter 210, based on the judgment result of the level judgment circuit 206; a quadrature modulator 204 for performing a quadrature modulation on the OFDM modulated wave transmitted through the modulated signal lines 220; and a PA 205 as an constant-saturation RF power amplifier for receiving an RF signal output from the quadrature modulator 204 at its RF input terminal and receiving the amplitude component from the selector 207 at its power-supply-voltage terminal.

In this embodiment, a circuit element having the same function as the transmit power control section 110 for specifying output power to the modulated signal generator 101 in the first embodiment may also be provided.

The constant-voltage supply line 211 is for supplying a constant voltage of 1.1 V converted by the second DC-to-DC converter 210.

The detector 202 performs operation for obtaining the absolute value of a conjugated modulated vector of the modulated signal (OFDM modulated wave), thereby obtaining the amplitude component.

The level judging circuit **206** receives the threshold voltage level stored in the ROM **209** as a storage means and the amplitude component flowing on the amplitude component line **222** and judges whether or not the voltage level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

5 The first DC-to-DC converter **208** amplifies the amplitude component input from the detector **202** through the amplitude component line **222** and supplies the amplitude component with a desired voltage amplitude to the power-supply-voltage terminal of the PA **205** and, at the same time, supplies a DC power required by the PA **205**.

10 The selector **207** selects and outputs one of the constant voltage of 1.1 V from the constant-voltage supply line **211** and the amplitude component input through the amplitude component line **222**, based on the judgment result of the level judging circuit **206**. At this time, if the voltage level of the amplitude component flowing on the amplitude component line **222** is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level stored in the ROM **209**, the selector **207** selects and outputs the constant voltage of 1.1 V from the constant-voltage supply line **211**, while selecting and outputting the amplitude component output from the detector **202** through the first DC-to-DC converter **208** if the voltage level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

20 The quadrature modulator **204** changes the OFDM wave (modulated wave), which is a conjugated phase modulated wave (Quadrature and In-phase) output from the detector **202**, into an RF signal.

25 The PA **205** as an RF power amplifier is a class-A amplifier and receives the RF signal output from the quadrature modulator **204** at its RF input terminal. When the system substantially adopts an EER technique, the PA **205** receives the amplitude component subjected to DC-to-DC conversion by the first DC-to-DC converter **208** at its power-supply-voltage terminal. As a result, the PA **205** outputs, from its RF output

terminal, a modulated wave whose phase and amplitude have been modulated, i.e., a modulated wave in which the amplitude is multiplied by the phase. If the system adopts a usual IQ quadrature modulation, the voltage supplied from the power-supply-voltage terminal of the PA 205 is fixed at the constant voltage of 1.1 V supplied from the constant-voltage supply line 211.

—Example of Signal Change in Processing—

FIG. 6 is a diagram for describing an example of change of a signal processed in the transmission circuit of this embodiment.

As shown in FIG. 6, the detector 202 detects an amplitude component as shown in graph 6B in FIG. 6 from an OFDM modulated wave (conjugated vector signal) exhibiting a constellation as shown in graph 6A in FIG. 6 and generated by the modulated signal generator 201. The level judging circuit 206 compares the output amplitude component with the threshold voltage level set in the ROM 209 to judge whether or not the level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

As shown in FIG. 3A, for example, the threshold voltage level set in the ROM 209 is herein the minimum value, e.g., 1V, in a linear region in which the response characteristic between an input voltage of the RF power amplifier and the voltage of an output signal thereof exhibits a sufficient linear response. Alternatively, the threshold voltage level may be set by an appropriate formula manipulation. The linear region is herein the range in which an output spectrum or EVM of an output satisfies the wireless standard of communication systems, and does not mean the response characteristic is a perfect linear characteristic.

The level judging circuit 206 judges, using this threshold voltage level of 1V, whether the level of the amplitude component generated by the detector 202 is higher than

the threshold voltage level (judgment C) or is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level (judgment D), and outputs the judgment result C or D to the selector 207.

Unlike the first embodiment, in this embodiment, the modulated signal (OFDM modulated wave) generated by the modulated signal generator 201 is input to the RF input terminal of the PA 205 irrespective of whether the level judging circuit 206 outputs the judgment result C or D (see graph 6A in FIG. 6). The OFDM modulated wave is detected by the detector 202, being divided into an amplitude component shown in graph 6B in FIG. 6 and a conjugated phase component (phase component) (not shown). The level judging circuit 206 compares the output amplitude component with the threshold voltage level set in the ROM 209 to judge whether or not the level of the amplitude component is higher than the threshold voltage level.

If the judgment C is input from the level judging circuit 206, the selector 207 selects the amplitude component input from the detector 202 through the amplitude component line 222 (see graph 6C in FIG. 6).

In this case, the input signal to the RF power amplifier is not a phase component as in the first embodiment but is a usual modulated wave having an amplitude component, and a pseudo-EER technique is adopted in the transmission circuit. Accordingly, this pseudo-EER technique allows the PA 205 to operate near a saturation point, i.e., to operate with the theoretical maximum efficiency. Operation by the pseudo-EER technique will be described in detail later.

On the other hand, if the judgment D is input from the level judging circuit 206, the selector 207 selects the constant voltage of 1.1 V.

In this case, a usual IQ quadrature modulation is adopted in the transmission circuit. Accordingly, a small margin is added to the threshold voltage, which is herein set at 1V, and therefore the constant voltage to be supplied to the PA 205 is set at, for

example, 1.1 V. Suppose the average voltage of a modulated wave having an amplitude of 1V or less is 0.8 V, the PA 205 operates with a backoff of 2 dB. At this time, the efficiency is 31.5 %, which is 63 % of the theoretical efficiency in class-A operation of 50%. Suppose operation of the PA 205 with the EER technique is saturation operation, a theoretical efficiency of 50 % is achieved. Accordingly, suppose the amplitude at the threshold voltage of 1 V or higher is about 10 %, the efficiency expected with the configuration of this embodiment is $50 \times 0.1 + 31.5 \times 0.9 = 33.4 \%$.

On the other hand, if only the usual quadrature modulation is performed, an efficiency as small as 10 % is obtained. However, according to the present invention, the efficiency is greatly improved.

In addition, in this embodiment, an EER technique is substantially performed with not the phase component but the modulated signal being input to the RF input terminal of the PA 205 without change. Accordingly, it is possible to avoid deterioration in Error Vector Magnitude (EVM), which is inevitable in known EER techniques by which only the phase component is input to the RF terminal of the RF power amplifier.

In a conventional transmission circuit, as shown in FIG. 3A, a nonlinear region in which the wireless standard is not satisfied is present in the response characteristic of the voltage amplitude at the RF output terminal **RFout** of the RF power amplifier with respect to a voltage input to the power-supply-voltage terminal thereof, so that the output signal is distorted as shown in the left-part of FIG. 3A. On the other hand, in this embodiment, an offset voltage applied to the amplitude component is appropriately adjusted in the DC-to-DC converter (where the offset voltage is 0.5 V in this embodiment) and, if the voltage level of the amplitude component is lower than or equal to the threshold voltage level, a usual quadrature modulation is performed. Accordingly, it is possible to make the entire response characteristic including 3A and 3B of the voltage amplitude at the terminal

RF_{out} with respect to the input voltage satisfy the wireless standard as shown in FIG. 3B. As a result, the amplitude component is output without distortion as shown in the left-part of FIG. 3B. As already described above, the linear region in this case also means that the resultant spectrum output from the power amplifier or EVM of the output satisfies the wireless standard of communication systems, and does not mean that the response characteristic is a perfect linear characteristic.

Specifically, in a case where only the phase component is input to the RF input terminal of the RF power amplifier, filtering is performed on the phase component to an extent that would not affect the EVM within a range allowable in the band of a digital-to-analog converter. The partial decrease in the level of the phase component caused by this filtering greatly deteriorates the EVM when the phase component is synthesized with the amplitude component at the output of the RF power amplifier. In addition, the necessary bandwidth of the modulated signal is about 1/6 smaller than that of the phase component separated from the modulated signal, so that it is possible to narrow the bandwidth of a digital-to-analog converter or an anti-alias filter for suppressing spurious components generated by digital-to-analog conversion. Accordingly, this embodiment is effective for reduction of power consumption of a digital-to-analog converter, downsizing of an inductor used for the filter, and cost reduction.

In addition, in a conventional transmission circuit, the input power couples to the output depending on an isolation characteristic between the input and output of RF power to/from the RF power amplifier, so that an amplitude causing an error in the output of the RF power amplifier appears even when the amplitude component is zero. On the other hand, in this embodiment, when the amplitude component supplied to the power-supply-voltage terminal of the RF power amplifier is zero, the power input to the RF input terminal of the RF power amplifier is also zero. Accordingly, a correctly-modulated wave

is formed at the output of the RF power amplifier independently of the isolation characteristic.

FIGS. 7A through 7D are diagrams for describing circuit operation in which a pseudo-EER technique is performed using a constant envelope region.

5 The modulated wave (OFDM modulated wave in this embodiment) input to the RF power amplifier is herein a triangular wave in which the envelope of the amplitude is triangular as shown in FIG. 7A for simplicity. FIG. 7B shows the internal structure of the RF power amplifier. The RF power amplifier of this embodiment is comprised of a common emitter bipolar transistor. The OFDM modulated wave which is the modulated
10 signal in this embodiment is input to the base (RF input terminal) of the bipolar transistor. This RF power amplifier is expressed by a simplified circuit in which a choke inductor is inserted between the collector (power-supply-voltage terminal) of the bipolar transistor and a terminal at which a collector voltage V_c is supplied and a line connecting the collector to the RF output terminal is grounded via an output load Z_L .

15 FIG. 7D is a graph for explaining an input-output characteristic of the RF power amplifier. The ordinate represents a collector current I_c of the RF power amplifier and the abscissa represents the collector voltage V_c applied to the power-supply-voltage terminal of the RF power amplifier. FIG. 7D shows that the I_c - V_c characteristic changes with respect to the base-emitter voltage V_{be} of the RF power amplifier and that a load line,
20 which is determined by the DC base-emitter voltage V_{be} , the DC current collector voltage V_c and the output load Z_L of the RF power amplifier, determines the variable range of the base-emitter voltage V_{be} and also determines the variable ranges of the collector current I_c and the collector voltage V_c .

FIG. 7C shows the resultant output voltage from the RF output terminal of the RF
25 power amplifier. The output power is determined by this output voltage and the output

impedance Z_L .

When the input voltage exceeds the variable range (V_{be4} - V_{be2} in FIG. 7D) of the base-emitter voltage V_{be} , the corrector current exceeds the variable range of the collector current I_c determined by the load line, thus creating a (constant envelope) time region in which the current amplitude is constant. The voltage amplitude is obtained by voltage conversion performed on the collector current I_c with the load impedance Z_L at the output, so that a constant (constant envelope) time region is also created in the voltage amplitude V_{out} ($=I_c \cdot Z_L$). A signal having a constant envelope region is substantially equivalent to a phase component, so that the same processing is performed in function as in EER in which the phase component and the amplitude component are respectively input to the RF input terminal and the power-supply-voltage terminal of the RF power amplifier. Therefore, this processing is herein referred to as a pseudo-EER technique.

In this embodiment, in a time region (region where the wireless standard is satisfied) in which the pseudo-EER technique is used, the threshold voltage in the level judging circuit is set such that the output voltage exhibits a constant envelope, or the input voltage is adjusted such that a saturated output current is obtained in a period in which the pseudo-EER technique is performed. In this manner, power amplification with the pseudo-EER technique is performed when the amplitude component of the modulated signal is higher than the threshold voltage in the level judging circuit.

—Modified Example of Embodiment 2—

FIG. 5 is a circuit block diagram schematically showing a configuration of a transmission circuit according to a modified example of the second embodiment. As in the transmission circuit of the second embodiment shown in FIG. 4, the transmission circuit of this modified example also includes: a modulated signal generator 201; a detector 202; a

quadrature modulator 204; a PA 205; modulated signal lines 220; and an amplitude component line 222. Basic functions of these circuit elements are the same as those described in the second embodiment.

In this modified example, one DC-to-DC converter 211 is provided and a selector
5 207 in which a DA converter is incorporated is interposed between the detector 202 and the DC-to-DC converter 211. A threshold voltage level of 1.1 V stored in a ROM 209 as a storage means is supplied to an RF input terminal of the selector 207 through a constant-voltage supply line 251. Specifically, in this modified example, the threshold voltage level to be compared with the voltage level of an amplitude component by a level judging circuit
10 206 is equal to the level of a constant voltage that is input from the constant-voltage supply line 251 to a power-supply-voltage terminal of the PA 205 via the selector 207. That is, the ROM 209 serves as a means for storing the threshold voltage level as well as a means for supplying the constant voltage to the power-supply-voltage terminal of the PA 205 in the region in which the wireless standard is not satisfied.

15 Modulating operation in this modified example is basically the same as in the second embodiment, so that the same effects as in the second embodiment are obtained. In addition, in this modified example, only one DC-to-DC converter is sufficient, so that the modified example is more advantageous than the second embodiment in terms of cost reduction. Further, the selector is disposed upstream from the DC-to-DC converter, so that
20 this modified example has another advantage of being able to use a transmitter with a relatively low breakdown voltage as long as the DC-to-DC converter also has an amplifying function.

In particular, the pseudo-EER technique used in the second embodiment or the modified example thereof has an advantage that a low EVM is maintained in a wide band,
25 as compared to the first embodiment. However, the efficiency is enhanced more easily

with the method of the first embodiment using the EER technique than with the second embodiment and the modified example thereof.

Now, a device for implementing the transmission circuits of the first and second embodiments and the modified example of the second embodiment will be described.

5 The modulated signal generator, the detector and the level judging circuit may be mounted on one LSI chip. In this case, the other circuit elements are provided on another LSI chip or discrete chips.

 The frequency converting means (e.g., the quadrature converter **104** or **204**) is not necessarily provided. But the provision of the quadrature converter **104** or **204** allows a
10 high-frequency signal in a wider band to be used. For example, since the DA converter handles signals with frequencies in the band of several hundreds MHz at most, the DA converter cannot process carriers whose frequencies exceed GHz. However, if the frequency converting means is used, the carrier frequency is up-converted easily.

 The frequency converting means such as the quadrature modulator is preferably
15 provided on an LSI chip on which the modulated signal generator, the detector and the level judging circuit are mounted.

 The DC-to-DC converter, the selector, the RF power amplifier and the ROM may be individually provided on respective discrete chips for a transmission circuit, or may be provided within a chip on which the modulated signal generator, the detector and the level
20 judging circuit are mounted, as a system LSI. In such a case, one or more circuit elements out of the DC-to-DC converter, the selector, the RF power amplifier and the ROM can be provided on a chip on which the modulated signal generator, the detector and the level judging circuit are mounted.

 The ROM for storing the threshold voltage level is not necessarily provided.
25 Alternatively, a signal indicating the threshold voltage level may be input from outside.

The means for inputting the constant voltage to the constant-voltage supply line may be a voltage generator provided on an LSI chip or may be a member for supplying a voltage to the power-supply-voltage terminal from outside.

The transmission circuit according to the present invention is applicable as a
5 transmission section of wireless communication apparatus such as cellular phones and wireless LANs.